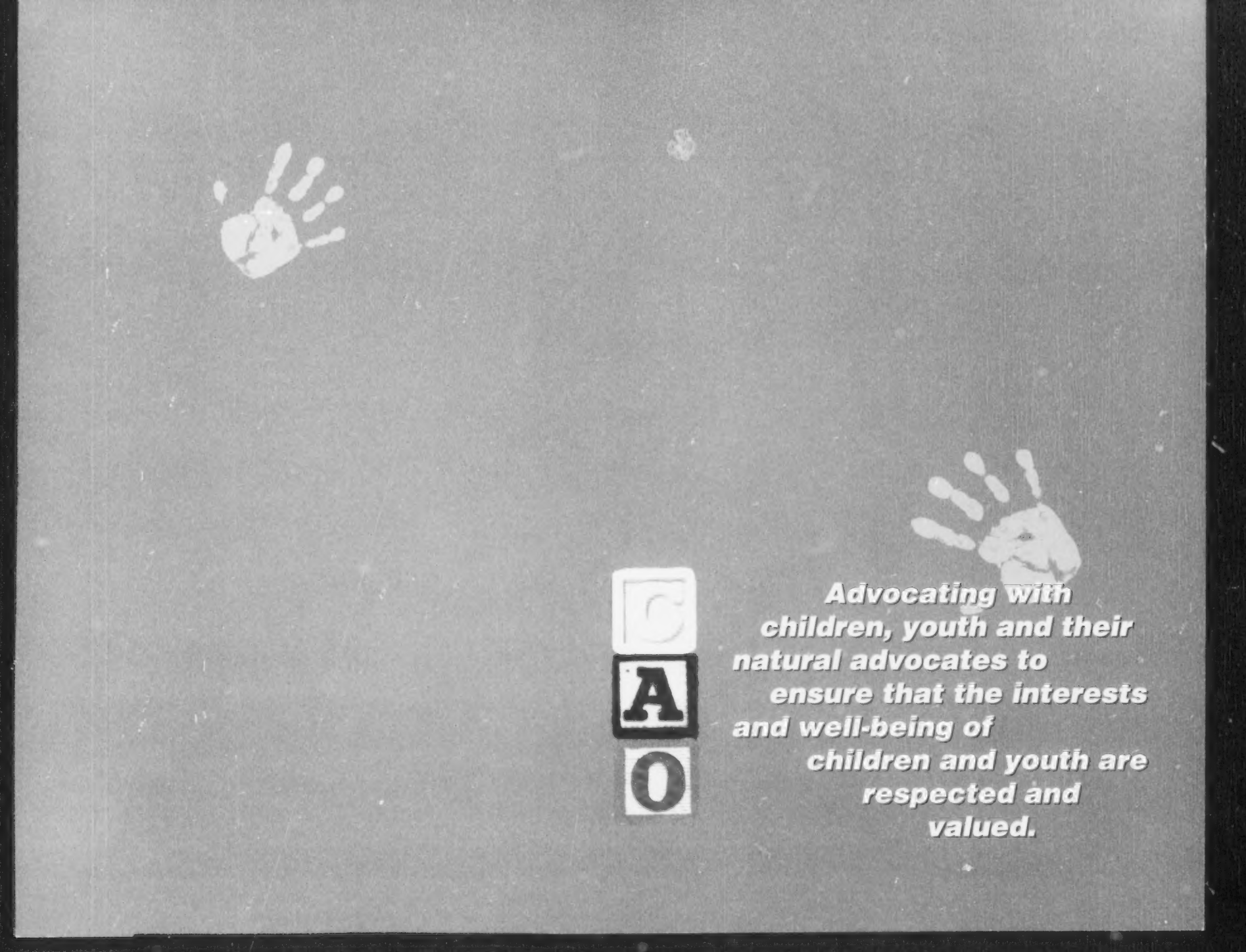
10 Years of Children's Advocacy...

Do We Have Your Attention Now?

2004 Annual Report

The Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office


CAO
Advocating with children, youth and their natural advocates to ensure that the interests and well-being of children and youth are respected and valued.

The Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office

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SASKATCHEWAN

105-04357/

March 2005

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Building
Province of Saskatchewan
Regina, Saskatchewan

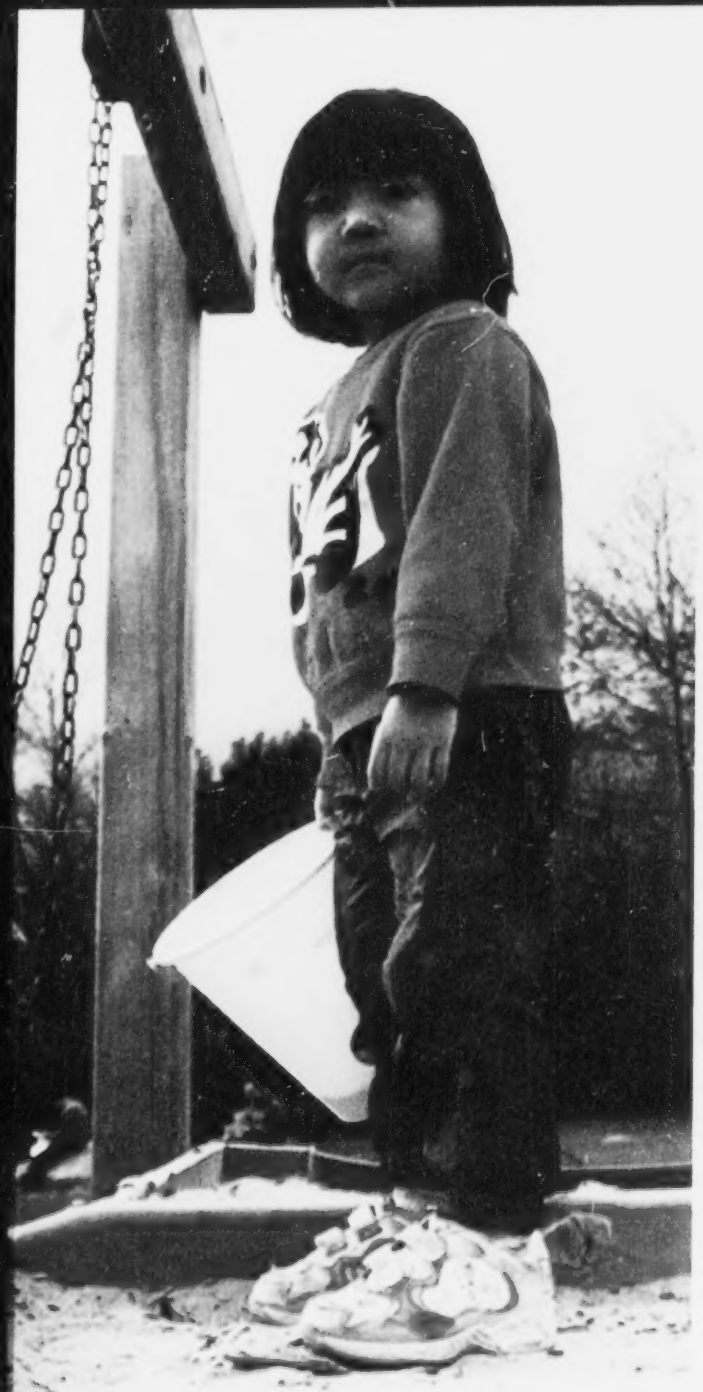
Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*, it is my privilege to submit to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly my tenth and final Annual Report as Children's Advocate for the Province of Saskatchewan.

Respectfully,

D Parker-Loewen

Deborah Parker-Loewen, Ph.D.
Children's Advocate
Province of Saskatchewan



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The Children's Advocate is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and acts pursuant to *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act.*

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Children's Advocate

From the Children's Advocate

"Our humanity, compassion and wisdom can be measured by how we care for our children."

(Saskatchewan Government, 1993)

Over the years the Government and citizens of Saskatchewan have made many promises to our children. One of the promises made and kept was to create a Children's Advocate Office in 1994. This promise was one part of a bigger vision for children called Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children. In reflecting on my ten years as Saskatchewan's Children's Advocate, I decided to revisit the promises made to our children when Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children was first launched in 1993. At that time a Policy Framework for an Action Plan was prepared and members of the public were invited to participate in creating the plan of action.

Saskatchewan's Promise to Children

In 1993, the Action Plan defined the desired state of Saskatchewan's children, or the vision for the Action Plan as:

> "Saskatchewan children will grow in environments that support their well-being and enable them to reach their potential." (Saskatchewan Government, 1993).

Values and assumptions about children were articulated and a set of principles identified to guide actions of benefit to children.

Seven goals, outlining what Saskatchewan wished to achieve for children, were clearly stated. These seven goals recognized that children must be **valued**, **safe**, **secure**, **healthy**, **culturally connected**, **socially responsible** and **knowledgeable and skilled**.
These goals are the framework for this 10th Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office.

Saskatchewan's Action Plan, Principles...

Guides for our actions to benefit children

Actions to enhance the well-being of children must be:

- **Preventive: Prevention is the best approach to meeting the needs of all children. At the same time, services must be targeted to those most in need of immediate intervention and care.**
- **Primary: Wherever decisions are made that may affect the child; the safety and best interests of the child must be the primary consideration.**
- **Culturally Appropriate: Responses to the needs of Indian and Métis children and families, and those of all cultural groups, must be developed in partnership with their leaders, authorities and communities.**
- **Supportive: The many family, kinship and community relationships which nurture the child and to which the child is attached, must be protected and supported.**
- **Collaborative: Partnerships among all sectors within governments and communities must be sustained and developed to respond effectively to the needs of children and families.**
- **Holistic: Services to children and families must be holistic and child- or family-centred, and supported by coordination, integration and partnerships.**
- **Empowering: Interventions and responses must encourage the child, the family and the community to participate freely in decisions which affect them.**

(Saskatchewan Government, 1993)

In many ways, after ten years in my position as Children's Advocate, I feel I have more questions than answers:

- *Have the promises made to our children ten years ago been honoured?*
- *Is there still a vision and a set of goals that guide what our province wants to achieve for our children?*
- *In our 100th year as a province, are we where we want to be in relation to our children?*
- *What more needs to be done and what plans are there to make it happen?*

From my perspective, the commitment made in 1993 to develop and implement a collaborative vision for our children has faded away. While I see a number of important government and community programs and initiatives for Saskatchewan children, I do not fully understand or appreciate how these are working together, in a purposeful way, to ensure that the well-being of all Saskatchewan children is really our priority. It is like we are on a journey to a goal of "child well-being." However, we are not really sure where we are going and everyone is not using the same road map to get there. Some examples:

- For years, I have called on the Saskatchewan government to create a comprehensive set of child well-being indicators; to get a baseline from which to measure how our children are doing over time. In Saskatchewan, this is still not being done.
- Saskatchewan has been a leader in creating some very innovative and well-intentioned programs and services for children and families. These include: School[PLUS], KidsFirst, Building Independence, the proposed Cognitive Disabilities Framework and FASD Framework, the Complex Case Management process, the Human Services Integrated Case Management Model, Child Welfare Redesign, the Youth Services Model, Early Learning and Care, the Anti-Bullying Strategy and I could name more. The question is, where is the overall vision for what we want for our children? Each of these initiatives has merit and each adds to the well-being of Saskatchewan children. However, I am having difficulty seeing how these initiatives are all interconnected and moving towards a set of common goals for our children.
- The continued over-involvement of Aboriginal children in child-welfare services and young-offender services must be given more attention and priority. In my ten years as Children's Advocate, I have been regularly questioned, and to some extent criticized, for continuing to review the individual and systemic issues related to this particularly vulnerable group of children.

Guides for our actions to benefit children

Actions to enhance the well-being of children must be:

Prevention is the best approach to meeting the needs of all children. At the same time, services must be targeted to those most in need of immediate intervention and care.

Wherever decisions are made that may affect the child; the safety and best interests of the child must be the primary consideration.

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The many family, kinship and community relationships which nurture the child and to which the child is attached, must be protected and supported.

Partnerships among all sectors within governments and communities must be sustained and developed to respond effectively to the needs of children and families.

Services to children and families must be holistic and child- or family-centred, and supported by coordination, integration and partnerships.

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Frequently I am asked to emphasize the underlying social issues, such as poverty or early childhood experiences, and reduce my emphasis on the need for quality services for these vulnerable children in government care. Children in care, the majority of whom are Aboriginal children, are among our most voiceless children. It is a sacred responsibility of this Office to continue to animate the voices of these children. I do not apologize for doing so. But where do the children in care, or the children at risk of being in care, fit into the "bigger picture?" I am still not sure.

In closing, I will say that, in these past ten years, there has been a number of positive changes in relation to the practices, policies and legislation impacting Saskatchewan children. We have highlighted some of these in this 10th Annual Report.

My term as Saskatchewan Children's Advocate ends in the Spring of 2005. I have been very privileged to have the opportunity to serve Saskatchewan's children and this province in this position. I sincerely thank everyone who has walked with our Office as an advocate for the children of our province. As I look into the future, I know we need stronger, more courageous community advocates to press for a clear vision and a clear set of common goals for all of our children. I urge government and community advocates to renew the common framework for what we, as a province, want for all children and families. I implore government and community advocates to, once again, outline a long-term provincial strategy that cuts across boundaries and mandates to enhance the well-being of all Saskatchewan children.

D Parker-Loewen

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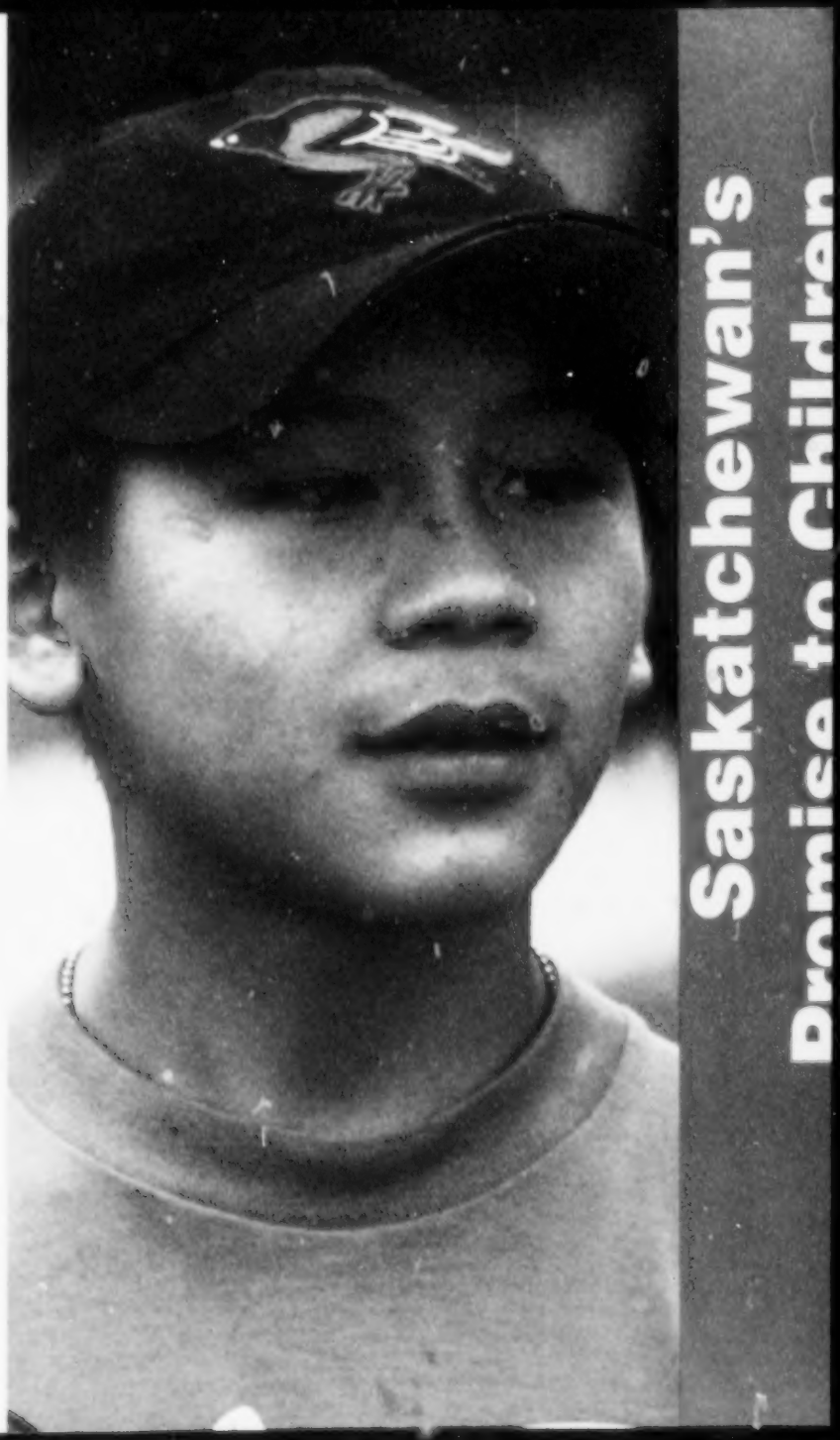

In 1993, the Saskatchewan Government made a commitment through Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children to prioritize the way in which it was serving the children of Saskatchewan. The Action Plan documented the goals the government had for working towards improving the well-being of Saskatchewan's children. These goals stressed the need to ensure that our children are: Valued, Safe, Secure, Healthy, Culturally Connected, Social Responsible, and Knowledgeable and Skilled.

Valued

Children's needs must be specifically addressed and given priority in the development of the legislation, policies, programs, and services which affect their well-being. All members of society, to the extent that they are able, must accept responsibility to recognize, respect and respond to the needs of children. Children must be recognized as having individual rights, equal rights and protections under the law. They must be given the opportunity to participate in the decisions affecting the quality of their lives. Positive social values that support the intrinsic worth and well-being of children and families must be cultivated and promoted.

Safe

Children must be protected from preventable harm, injury, trauma and death, physical and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation. They must enjoy healthy physical environments and be protected from environmental hazards. If, as a last resort, a child is placed away from his or her family home, the alternative must be safe, secure and nurturing.

Secure

Children must receive adequate food, shelter, clothing and transportation. They must receive adequate financial, social, emotional, recreational and spiritual support through their families and communities. They must be protected by the intervention of individuals, families, communities and the state. Where interventions by the state occur, children must be given the opportunity for a permanent family environment, though the form of the family may vary for each child.

Healthy

Children must be protected from preventable disease and disability and unhealthy practices. They must enjoy self-esteem, self-acceptance, healthy lifestyles, and healthy social and physical environments.

Culturally Connected

Children must be given the opportunity to value, preserve and participate in the life of their cultural community and to respect the cultural communities of others. For the Indian and Métis peoples, positive cultural identity and connection to their culture are priority needs.

Socially Responsible

Children must be given the opportunity to be productive, to make a meaningful contribution to others, to participate in the life of the community, to value others for their individual and cultural diversity, to have a social and environmental conscience, and to be held accountable for their actions under the law.

Knowledgeable & Skilled

Children must receive educational opportunities that give them the skills and abilities to develop to their potential. In order to participate effectively in a changing society, they must be given the opportunity to achieve literacy, knowledge, social and life skills.

(Saskatchewan Government, 1993)

Valued

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Canada is a signatory to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Convention) and Saskatchewan has affirmed these rights. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* is the most universally embraced human rights treaty in history. Children are valued, in the most fundamental way, when their rights are articulated, promoted and protected.

In May 1995, the Saskatchewan Council on Children recommended that government consider developing a "Children's Bill of Rights in Saskatchewan in consultation with the Children's Advocate, the Children's Council, the Youth in Care Network and other interested groups and agencies" (1995). In 1999 and in acknowledgement of the 10th Anniversary of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the Government of Saskatchewan, with the support of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the Children's Advocate Office, published *A Child Should Know... Review of Rights and Responsibilities for Children and Youth*. This booklet outlined the rights that "are essential to encourage development of resilient, responsible children who can, in turn, contribute to society as individuals" (Saskatchewan Government, 2003). While needing updating, this booklet was, and continues to be, a useful description of Saskatchewan legislation that highlights how our children are valued.

This booklet is not a 'bill of rights' and does not in any way attempt to evaluate how Saskatchewan legislation protects children's rights as outlined in the Convention. One could argue that some rights, as defined in the Convention, are not fully actualized. The Convention becomes an advocacy tool and a visionary document used to promote increased voice for and protection of children. There continues to be a lack of awareness of the Convention and of the rights of children in general.

Society struggles fundamentally with questions about how to value our children and meaningfully include them as participants in their own rights. These questions will continue to challenge us into the future. We need to affirm our commitment to valuing our children by promoting and protecting their fundamental rights. Our future promises to our children should be consistent with the four guiding principles of the Convention, which state that all children have the right to their survival, protection, participation and development.

"A World Fit for Children" commits signatories to:

In all actions related to children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Nations reaffirm their vow to break the cycle of poverty within a single generation, united in the conviction that investments in children and the realization of their rights are among the most effective ways to eradicate poverty.

Each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights; therefore, all forms of discrimination affecting children must end.

Children must get the best possible start in life. Their survival, protection, growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition is the essential foundation of human development.

Children and adolescents are resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

(UNICEF, 2002)

CAO Actions

Education on Children's Rights

1996... Since 1996, the CAO has been working to raise awareness and educate children and adults on rights that children have as outlined in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

2004... For the tenth anniversary of the CAO, on November 25, 2004, we launched a new program called the RAP, or Rights Advocacy Project. The goal of the RAP is to educate children and youth, in a fun interactive way, about rights and to teach them how to advocate for themselves and others. The launch included a celebration with 200 Saskatchewan students at Sacred Heart Community School in Regina. The RAP is open to all schools in Saskatchewan and other child-serving organizations interested in participating in rights/advocacy education. Priority will be given to community schools and children and youth at risk.

Custody and Access

1998... The Saskatchewan Children's Advocate, with the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates, represented the interests of children affected by parental custody and access disputes to the Special Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Senate.

Celebrating Children's Rights

1999... In celebration of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, on November 17, 1999, the CAO hosted a walk to the Saskatchewan Legislative Building.

UN Special Session

2002... In May 2002, the UN General Assembly held a Special Session on Children. The Children's Advocate was appointed as the observer from Saskatchewan. On June 26, 2002, the four Saskatchewan representatives shared their experiences in a presentation at Government House.

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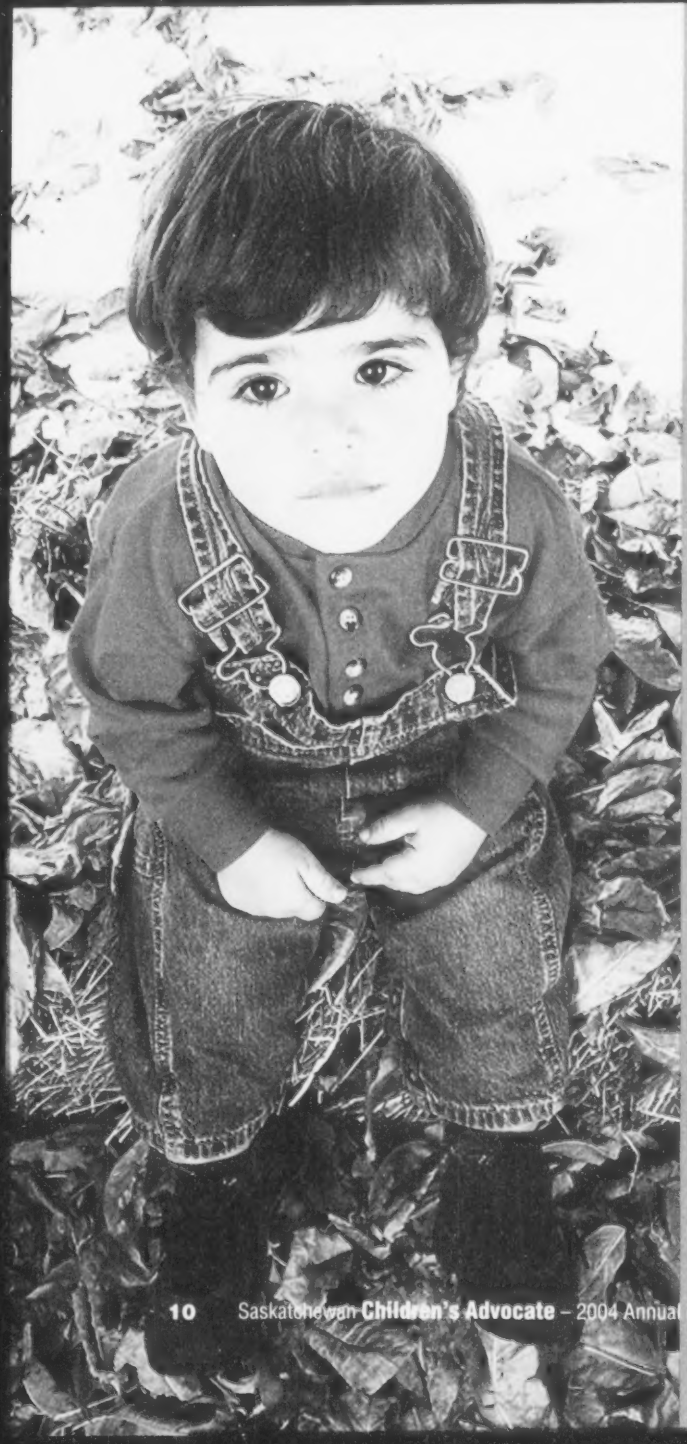

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An estimated 135,573 child maltreatment investigations were carried out in Canada in 1998.... An estimated 61,201 child maltreatment investigations (45%) were substantiated, an estimated 29,668 child investigations (22%) remained suspected, and an estimated 44,704 child investigations (33%) were unsubstantiated.

(Trocme, N. et al, 2001)

Keeping our children safe is one of our most compelling goals. In these past ten years the CAO has made numerous reports and recommendations, the majority of these raising issues or concerns about child safety. None of us wants to see a child get hurt, abused, neglected, exploited or die. Sadly and sometimes in spite of our best efforts to keep children safe, as a society, we fail. Issues regarding child safety are regularly reviewed as individual and systemic advocacy issues in the CAO. We are often in a position of reviewing some of the more tragic or sensational situations where the child-serving system has not protected a child or group of children from harm.

One of the ongoing concerns identified in the CAO has been the lack of a reporting framework to demonstrate the effectiveness of the measures being taken to improve the well-being and safety of our children. Since 1998, the CAO has repeatedly called on government to create a comprehensive set of child well-being indicators, establish a baseline from which to measure child well-being and to then regularly and publicly report on progress. We recognize that this is a complicated matter and that many of the indicators are not easily defined or measured or that some measures could be misinterpreted or misunderstood if they are taken out of context.

THEN...

1998 LICO Child Poverty Rate 17.5% (45,000 children)

(Social Policy Research Unit, November 2004)

The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen and centralize its mechanism to integrate and analyze systematically disaggregated data on all children under 18 for all areas covered by the Convention, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable groups (i.e. aboriginal children; children with disabilities; abused and neglected children; street children within the justice system; refugee and asylum seeking children). The Committee urges the State party to use these indicators and data effectively for the formulation and evaluation of legislation, policies and programmes for the implementation, resource allocation and monitoring of the Convention.

(United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003).

This is an issue that needs to also be considered nationally and interprovincially. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003) recommended that Canada use data on children to formulate and evaluate legislation, policies and program for the implementation, resource allocation and monitoring of the United Nations Convention in Canada. The CAO supports this and believes that Saskatchewan could take a lead role in this endeavour. This would be one way we could measure if our children are safer into the future than they are now.

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2002 LICO Child Poverty Rate 18.7% (43,800 children)

(Social Policy Research Unit, November 2004)

CAO Actions

CAO Recommendations 1994 to 2004

1994... Since the CAO first opened its doors in November 1994, the Office has made 206 recommendations to government departments and agencies. In addition, the CAO has reported numerous findings and made informal requests to improve conditions for Saskatchewan children. In 2003, the CAO developed a database to track the general status of these recommendations. Of the 206 recommendations made by December 31, 2004:

- 188 (91%) have been accepted; 7 (3%) have not been accepted; and for 11 (5%), the relevant department or agency's position on the recommendation is unclear.
- 85 (41%) have been fully implemented; 72 (35%) have been partially implemented; 26 (13%) have not been acted upon; and for 23 (11%), there is insufficient data to determine the status of the recommendation.
- 40% focussed on family services policy and practice; 17% on issues related to multiple departments; 13% on case planning and practice; 10% on standards in custody facilities.

Saskatchewan Child Well-Being Indicators

1998... In 1998, the CAO identified the need for a comprehensive set of child well-being indicators. To date, no action has been taken to address this issue, although it has been repeatedly raised in CAO annual reports.

Sexual Exploitation

1996... In 1996, the CAO stressed the need for a community approach to addressing the needs of youth involved in the sex trade. The CAO has continued to support efforts in this area and presented, in December 2000, to the Special Legislative Committee To Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade.

2002... The CAO supported the direction of the government to protect children and youth from exploitation through the sex trade.

Safe

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Children must receive adequate food, shelter, clothing and transportation. They must receive adequate financial, social, emotional, recreational and spiritual support through their families and communities. They must be protected by the intervention of individuals, families, communities and the state. Where interventions by the state occur, children must be given the opportunity for a permanent family environment, though the form of the family may vary for each child.

The sad reality is that, as a society, we are not providing a secure environment for all Saskatchewan children to live and grow. In spite of the best efforts of child-serving systems, the number of children coming into the child welfare system is still increasing and the pressures experienced by service providers are continuing. This is a phenomenon occurring across our nation and one that requires a comprehensive national review.

It is quite common for those of us working at the CAO to be asked: "What has really changed for children in the past 10 years?" While there have been many positive changes, there is still considerable work to be done.

In April 2000, the Children's Advocate tabled the *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices*, in the Legislative Assembly. This tenth annual report of the CAO contains a Special Report on the themes and issues identified in this review.

Support for the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network

1995... The CAO has been a strong supporter of the Network for many years and has been encouraged by the achievements of this group of young people.

2004... In 2004, the CAO was pleased to be able to assist the Network in the publishing of their book *It's OK Fairytale & Coloring Book*, describing the experiences of two young foster children as they meet the family they will stay with, go on adventures, and attend a new school. The book was written by Network members. Illustrations, for the most part, were also provided by children in care.

CAO Actions

Public Reporting on Issues Facing Children in Care

1995... Issues facing children in care and the child-welfare system have been raised in every CAO annual report, since 1995.

1998... The CAO completed and publicly released the *Child Death Review of Karen Rose Quill*. The CAO also began to conduct reviews of the deaths of a limited number of children receiving services pursuant to *The Child and Family Services Act*, or the *Young Offenders Act* (now the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*) or were attending a facility or a family child care home licenced under *The Child Care Act*.

2000... The CAO released the *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to their Voices*, a review of the Saskatchewan foster care system. The CAO also participates on the national Advisory Committee of the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare.

2001... The CAO released *A Summary of Child Death Reviews: August 1996 to December 1998*

2002... The CAO completed the independent fact-finding examination of the services provided to "Baby Andy" and his family. The Children's Advocate was an independent observer during panel deliberations.

2003... The CAO released *A Summary of Child Death Reviews for the Year 1999*

THEN... NOW...

Children/Youth in Care by Nature of Involvement Under *The Child and Family Services Act*, March 1996 to March 2004[1]

	NUMBER OF CHILDREN/YOUTH								
NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Apprehended, Matter before Courts	618	617	735	791	789	692	737	622	464
Section 9: Voluntary Agreements	628	570	643	727	881	826	750	773	699
Temporary: One year or less	114	185	173	162	184	187	163	236	286
Permanent: Until age of majority	670	607	569	510	442	429	391	363	336
Long-term care orders:	228	296	353	446	587	705	814	854	914
Section 56: Agreement for service to previous ward 18 to 21 years, so that education may continue.	48	63	63	74	64	67	84	99	99
Total in Care	2306	2338	2536	2710	2947	2906	2939	2947	2798
16/17 Year-Old Program[2]	228	78	348	320	293	313	364	362	283
Total Children in Care under *The Child and Family Services Act*[3]	2534	2416	2884	3030	3240	3219	3303	3309	3081
Total Children in Care under *The Child and Family Services Act*[3] under the authority of FNCFS agencies[4]	370	536	765	951	980	1070	1042	1082	1133
Total Children in Care under DCRE and FNCFS agencies	2904	2952	3649	3981	4220	4289	4345	4391	4214

Note 1: Excludes children in care of the Community Living Division.

Note 2: Includes only those youth in this program under a Section 10 agreement. Services for 16 and 17 year-olds became a separate program in 1995-96. It combines child welfare, youth services and income support for youth and provides a single entry point for services. Because it was a new program, tracking systems were in development. There was initial reporting of the youth being served in 1996, incomplete reporting in 1997, then full reporting from 1998 onward.

Note 3: The total children in care under *The Child and Family Services Act* does not include children brought into care by First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) agencies.

Note 4: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has indicated to the CAO that "prior to fall of 1998 INAC was implementing an electronic Child Care Information System. Statistical accuracy for children as per specific day of care was reduced prior to the electronic system. When CIMD submission is done mid July sometimes stats are understated -- due to care records that have not yet been processed."

Sources: Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment (DCRE), personal communication, February 12, 2005); Saskatchewan Social Services , personal communication, February 12, 2003); Saskatchewan Social Services, personal communication, February 13, 2003); and Saskatchewan Social Services, March, 1999). Quarterly Statistical Reports. Regina: Author; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, personal communication, January 23, 2004 & February 14, 2005).

Special Report

"You can't learn the feeling of showing up at somebody's house for the first time and now they're gonna be your parents."

(Female, youth formerly in care, 20, CIYCR 2000)

Have We Listened?

Children and Youth in Care Review: Observations... Five Years Later

Background

In April 2000, the Children's Advocate tabled the report, *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices*, in the Legislative Assembly. The Children and Youth in Care Review (CYICR), requested by the government, was to assist in creating positive change for children in care in Saskatchewan. The Review consisted of:

- an extensive examination of the literature;
- public and individual consultations with more than 1,100 residents, including 164 children and youth in or from care; and
- a representative random sample review of files of children in care.

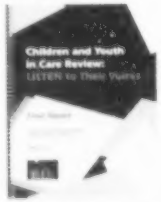
Ten themes emerged during the Review. These themes were used to outline directions for the government and community to take to address the needs of children living in care. The Review generated seven primary recommendations and 45 sub-recommendations that focussed on improving services for children in care.

In the nearly five years since this report was released, the Children's Advocate Office has attentively monitored the actions taken by government and communities. The CAO challenged everyone – elected members of the Legislative Assembly, government officials, and community members – to LISTEN to the voices of children, youth, family members and others who are impacted by being in government care. We asked that everyone take action to make the lives of all children, especially those living in government care, better.

Now, five years later, this special report offers our observations about what is different. The ten major themes identified in 2000 are used as the framework for the CAO observations. These themes reflect what we still believe are the fundamental areas that require attention.

Directions for the Future: Major Themes

- Listen to Children and Youth
- Provide Time and Resources to the Caregivers
- Make Practices Consistent with Policies and Legislation
- Be a Responsible Parent Yourself
- Work with First Nations and Métis Nation People and Stop Putting So Many Aboriginal Children into Care
- Protect the Traditions and Cultural Values of the Children Who Are in Care
- Involve the People Who Care
- Reduce Child Poverty
- Invest Earlier in Children and Families
- Don't Expect a Quick Fix



(Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office, April 2000)

Child Welfare Redesign: Seven Goals

- To provide high quality care for children and youth in the care of the Minister.
- To support the community to provide services for families with high needs to serve children, youth and families to prevent the need for child welfare services.
- To provide services that increase the capacity of families to safely care for children and youth in their homes.
- To provide permanent families for children and prepare youth for independence.
- To work with First Nations and Métis people to provide culturally appropriate programs and services.
- To encourage and support community involvement and ownership in programs and services for vulnerable children and youth.
- To improve performance through development of and report on accountability measures.

(Saskatchewan Social Services, 2002)

Government's Response

The Children and Youth in Care Review was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in April 2000. In the fall of 2000, a discussion paper, *Child Welfare in Saskatchewan* (2000) was prepared by Saskatchewan Social Services (Saskatchewan Social Services, 2000). The government's paper was informed by the CAO recommendations and observations, as well as other cross-jurisdictional research completed by the department and a major consultation held with the Child Welfare League of America. In addition, government held consultations with key partners and stakeholders.

In June 2001, the Minister of Social Services formally responded to our Review. All of the recommendations made by the CAO were formally accepted and the department reported on actions undertaken in response to our recommendations (Saskatchewan Social Services, 2001). In addition, also in June 2001, Saskatchewan Social Services publicly announced a multi-year plan to redesign child welfare services. This child welfare redesign was prompted by a number of circumstances, but fundamentally the department concluded that there was a need to develop a plan that would provide for "sweeping system-wide changes well beyond the recommendations of the Children's Advocate" (Van Mulligen, Honourable H, 2001).

The Department of Community Resources and Employment (DCRE) plan to redesign child welfare services included three fundamental principles guiding the strategic directions, and identified seven goals. In April 2004, the DCRE provided the CAO with a comprehensive summary of actions taken to achieve each of these seven goals over the past four years. In addition, staff in the CAO meet on a regular basis with officials in the DCRE. We continue to be updated on progress as it occurs. The observations made in this report are based on the information provided to the CAO by the DCRE, combined with our reflections of our advocacy work with and for children and youth in care.

Our Observations

Listen to Children and Youth

The CAO called on government to listen to what children and youth have to say when developing and implementing good family services policy. From our perspective, DCRE has made significant and positive progress in this area, including:

- New policy requirements to include children and youth in plans of care based on their age and development.
- Providing children and youth in care with written information about their right to appeal decisions affecting their care, including their right to contact the CAO.
- Increased, annualized funding for the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network (SYICCN). The SYICCN now has two full-time coordinators and at least four active, local networks. Senior managers with DCRE meet regularly with representatives of the SYICCN and obtain input from these young people on a variety of policy and practice matters.
- The establishment of a Child Welfare Reference Committee to provide advice on the child welfare redesign. Key stakeholders, including youth from care, participate in this committee.

However, the CAO has also observed that:

- While young people are more readily included in planning and decision-making, this is not yet fully established as a routine practice in every DCRE region.
- Information provided to children and youth regarding their rights while they are in care is dependent on the practices in the region in which they reside and the particular worker they have been assigned. Rights information is not regularly and formally provided to all children in care.
- The legislative amendments, to include participation rights for children in care as specifically recommended by the CAO, have not been made.

Provide Time and Resources to the Caregivers

From our ten years of work as a Children's Advocate Office in Saskatchewan, we know that for the most part, staff at all levels of the DCRE and other government departments are committed to providing the best quality services they reasonably can for the children and families they serve. We also recognize that child-welfare workers, foster parents and others are feeling very challenged to effectively meet the policy and legislative requirements of their work. In 2000, the CAO identified a need to provide time and resources to the caregivers of the children in care. The Review stated: "Those who meet the parenting obligations of government, especially foster parents and social workers, must have the time available to carry out their obligations compassionately and competently. Caretakers without proper support and lacking the time to give attention to children and youth, run the risk of continuing the neglect and abuse that brought the children and youth into care in the first place."

The DCRE has reported significant progress in this area, including:

- In 2001, adding 54 full-time equivalent positions (FTE's); 20 were casework positions in the areas of long-term and permanent wards and to work intensely to reunify children in care with their families.
- Providing an annual cost-of-living increase to foster families in four of the past five years.
- Injecting new resources into the child welfare and family support systems in an attempt to ensure that the resources that are in place are, at mimimum, adequate.
- Developing a comprehensive child-welfare training program (CORE Training) that is provided to all new child welfare caseworkers. This program consists of three components: 16 days of classroom curriculum; on-site sessions; and follow-up file reviews to assess the extent to which training is reflected in practice. This training is also offered to staff of the First Nations Child and Family Service (FNCFS) agencies.
- Requiring every caseworker in a child welfare position to have, at minimum, either a Bachelor of Social Work or a Bachelor of Indian Social Work degree. However, this is not a requirement with all FNCFS agencies.

- Providing, on an ongoing basis, professional development opportunities to department staff in a variety of settings.
- Establishing a Workload Measurement Project, chaired by an Assistant Deputy Minister and an SGEU representative and completing a preliminary report in June 2003. A Child Welfare Human Resources Committee was also established and work is ongoing to address the recommendations arising from the reports of these committees.
- Assigning, as of June 2003, a full-time Senior Program Consultant to support the provincial foster care program.
- Revising, in March 2004, the Fee For Service for foster families. Additional compensation is provided to foster families on an as-needed basis. In addition, the rates paid for "baby-sitting" were increased and a respite policy for foster parents was implemented in October 2000.
- Expanding the residential placement resources in a variety of locations across the province.

Based on the progress reported by the DCRE to our office, it would appear that resources have been added that have reduced the pressures caregivers were experiencing in relation to having the time and supports needed to carry out their obligations. The introduction of the Children's Services Manual, with clear policies and obligations, may have in some ways, added to the pressures experienced by caregivers. It is our opinion that social services workers, foster parents and others continue to need ongoing and enhanced supports in order to be able to give children and families the time and attention they need.

Make Practices Consistent with Policies and Legislation

One of the issues the CAO identified was a major disconnection between the policies and the practice of child welfare. Too often, there was a serious gap between the way child welfare services were being provided to children and families (the practice) and the legislation, policies and standards that are in place.

Most of the failures or problems in the foster care system, as we understood them, were as a result of this disconnection. This continues to be a major issue in relation to the CAO's on-going child advocacy work and the child death reviews. In essence, the gap between policy and practice is the basis of many of the concerns observed in relation to child welfare services.

Non-compliance with existing policy has been persistently observed in our review of child deaths and in December 2003 we urged the DCRE to implement "clearly defined and carefully measured quality assurance mechanisms that evaluate adherence to policy and standards" and that " the results of these quality assurance audits must be made public to ensure increased transparency and public accountability" (Saskatchewan CAO, 2003). As we noted in our report on the death of Karen Rose Quill (Saskatchewan CAO, 1998), "management at all levels exhibited a tolerance for non-compliance with established procedures." We continue to be concerned that children and families are not receiving the quality of services they are entitled to in both legislation and policy. In addition, also in December 2003, the Provincial Auditor recommended that "DCRE follow its policies to ensure that children in its care are protected and that payments to care providers are authorized" (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2003).

One of the seven goals of the DCRE Child Welfare Redesign is "To improve performance through development of accountability measures." In this regard, the DCRE has reported to us a number of actions, both taken and underway, which are intended to achieve this goal. Since 2001, the Child and Family Services Division of the DCRE has completed annual audits of child protection, children in care and foster home files. In late 2003, the department introduced a Quality Improvement Plan to improve adherence to policy and ensure quality services are being provided to clients (Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, 2004).

In June 2004, the Provincial Auditor reported that "if senior management maintains long-term commitment to the Plan, it should provide a reasonable basis for the Department to achieve and maintain compliance with its policies and procedures" (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2004). The DCRE reported some general trends in their compliance results (increases and decreases) for 2003 in their 2003-2004 Annual Report. The CAO is hopeful that more specific results will be reported publicly in upcoming Annual Reports.

Part of the Quality Improvement Plan is the systematic review all open Child Protection, Children's Services, Foster Homes, and Alternate Care files over a 120-day period to ensure that they meet compliance to standards. This is a laudable goal and one that is fully supported by the CAO. We remain cautiously optimistic that, over time, the accountability plan (which includes regular file audits and the application of a best practices model of service) will assist with meeting the policy objectives and ensure that children and families receive quality services.

Be a Responsible Parent Yourself

Repeatedly during the Review the CAO heard that government, as a parent of children in care, was not doing an adequate job. The Review made a very strong recommendation "That every child in care has a comprehensive, child-based plan of care that recognizes the importance of stability in the child's life and that honours the continued involvement of family, extended family and community" (CYICR Rec. 2.0).

The DCRE has reported to the CAO that a Child Assessment and Development Plan has been initiated. They have also indicated that staff have been trained in its use and all children are to receive an assessment using this format within one month of being placed in out-of-home care. In addition, there is now policy requiring systematic annual reviews of the care plans for all permanent and long-term wards as well as for all children who have been in care 18 months.

The extent to which these reviews are completed is still unknown. Based on the issues raised in our individual advocacy files (Saskatchewan Children's Advocate, 2004), care plans are not readily available for a number of the children where individual issues are raised with our Office. The DCRE reported an "increase in ensuring there is a current Assessment and Case Plan for a child/youth in the care of the Minister" (Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, 2004). Compliance is tracked through regular DCRE file reviews.

There is emerging and compelling data to support the importance of quality care for "looked after children" or children living in out-of-home care. Children for whom government is the "parent" need "a sense of being cherished by a significant caregiver" (Children in Limbo Task Force, 2002). They need to know that "every child matters", including them (Jones, 2004). Children in care must be prevented from growing up "in a tundra of loneliness" (Gilligan, 2004). What must be emphasized is that a careplan, or the "Child Assessment and Development Plan" is not just another bit of paperwork or another form to complete. It is a framework for understanding each child's developmental needs in the context of their family and community. It is critical that we find a way to ensure that children in care experience both stability of placement and continuity of care, in a manner that they truly feel cherished.

"Caregivers, teachers and social workers should remember that the detail of what they do with children counts... It is important not to be seduced only by the big questions...and [not to lose] sight of crucial details of what can sustain the positive development of [each] child today."

(Gilligan, 2004)

Sadly, it is our experience in the CAO that many children who are living in an out-of-home care situation continue to be exposed to conditions such as multiple moves or inadequate support services, that lead to more behavioural and psychological problems. Improving the quality of care, focusing on planning and implementing solid care plans to achieve permanence for children, is essential to "being a responsible parent."

Work with First Nations and Métis Nation People and Stop Putting So Many Aboriginal Children into Care

In 2000, the CAO stated: "It is an outrage that about 70 percent of children in care in Saskatchewan are Aboriginal children." Now, in 2004 we are seeing even more Aboriginal[1] children in care.

The number of First Nations on-reserve children in Canada, who are placed in out-of-home care, increased by 71.5 percent between 1995 and 2001 (Mckenzie, 2002). In Saskatchewan, the increase in the number of First Nations children on-reserve placed in out-of-home care has been more modest, but equally alarming. The number of Métis, Non-Status, Status and children of Aboriginal origin where the status was unknown was 65 percent in 1999; in 2004 the percentage had risen to 69 percent (see Table page 25). While this increase may seem slight, these figures do not take into account the children in care of the 17 FNCFS agencies which were created over the past ten years and are now serving children not traditionally served by the provincial government. In 1995, there were 370 children in care of three FNCFS agencies. As of March 31, 2004, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) reported there were a total of 1133 children in care of an FNCFS agency in Saskatchewan, representing a 206 percent increase over ten years.

The over-representation of Aboriginal children in care continues to be a grave concern. "A complex set of factors underlie the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child-welfare system. The high rates of poverty, inadequate housing and substance abuse that seem to be leading this over-representation are problems that extend beyond the child-welfare system.

Aboriginal children "represent an estimated 40 percent of the 76,000 children and youth placed in out-of-home care in Canada."

(Farris-Manning and Zandstra, 2003)

[1] The term Aboriginal included First Nations, Inuit and Métis children.

While shifting control of child-welfare services to Aboriginal communities should help in the development of services that are more appropriately geared to the needs of Aboriginal children and families, we should not expect to see a significant decrease in admission rates until resources are allocated to address social problems that undermine parents' abilities to care adequately for their children" (Trocme, Knoke, and Blackstock, 2004). Clearly, the fundamental issues, such as child poverty, still must be addressed.

Recognizing the importance of developing a special strategy to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care, the DCRE has taken a dramatic step and is planning to provide "kinship care" support to low-income extended family members or other persons as a resource to prevent children coming into care. *The Child and Family Services Act* was amended in the spring of 2003 and, once proclaimed, will include provisions for a child who is determined to be in need of protection to be placed in "kinship care" as an alternative to foster care. While this is a laudable plan, there are concerns. One of our concerns was that children who are placed in alternative care arrangements, such as kinship care, must have a right to the same level of safety and support provided to them as would be provided to children in foster care. We are pleased to note that the amendments also include a provision whereby the court shall order a study of the home where the child is proposed to be placed and that this study is to indicate if the proposed home is safe and adequate for the child. This is rather ground-breaking legislation, although the date of proclamation and implementation is pending further consultation with shareholders. It is difficult to ascertain what impact this will have on children in care or at risk of coming into care.

The DCRE reported that "The number of children placed with extended family as an alternative to foster care has increased by well over 70 percent since 1998-99", indicating that this legislative change is following what appears to be a policy shift that has already been taking place.

Given that the number of Aboriginal children in care continues to rise, it will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of these amendments over time.

Year	Number of Children in Alternate Care
1998/1999	398
1999/2000	490
2000/2001	625
2001/2002	671
2002/2003	710
2003/2004	814

(Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, 2005)

Protect the Traditions and Cultural Values of the Children Who Are in Care

The CAO recommended "That the DSS and First Nations and Métis Nation governments review the impact that long-term care orders in conjunction with adoption policies are having on the lives of children who are long-term wards and being raised in foster care. The growing number of young children who are now long-term wards is alarming" (CYICR, Rec. 2.7).

The Western Provinces' Children's Advocates' Working Group (2002) reported on trends in permanency planning for children in permanent and long-term care. The four Western Advocates noted that "generally, in practice, the term 'permanency planning' is not nor should it be tied to a specific intervention such as adoption. Rather it is a 'developmental' approach to services based on the practice principles of continuity, permanence and stability of care relationships for children."

Permanency is: "the systematic process of carrying out, within a brief time-limited period, a set of goal-directed activities designed to help children live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to develop lifetime relationships."

(Maluccio and Fein, 1983)

A December 2004 decision of the Queen's Bench Court regarding five children who were in need of protection, raises questions regarding the future for First Nations children in long-term or permanent care.

Under policy, the DCRE would not register First Nations children for adoption without the consent of their band. The court ruled that the policy "breaches the children's s.7 and 15 Charter rights and ... is unconstitutional and the Department is directed to deal with First Nations children in a manner consistent with their best interests and place them for adoption where appropriate..." (Queen's Bench, 2004).

It is too soon to comment on what implications this judicial decision will have on practice, policy or legislation impacting children in long-term or permanent care in Saskatchewan. However, it is critical that government and First Nations and Métis leaders find common agreements to ensure that children have the continuity and stability of care that they need for their optimal development.

Part of ensuring that First Nations and Métis children in care have strong and meaningful involvement with their traditions, cultural values and communities, is to increase the number of First Nations and Métis foster families and human services staff. The DCRE and the First Nations child and family services agencies are increasing their recruitment efforts in this regard and report some modest success in the provincial recruitment and retention strategies.

Involve the People Who Care

Shortly after the release of the Review, government established a Child Welfare Reference Committee, composed of representatives from the SYICCN, the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association, the Saskatchewan Adoptive Parents Association, FNCFS agencies, Métis Nations, Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers, as well as various other government and university representatives. This committee provides advice to the DCRE on their child-welfare redesign process. However, it is difficult for the CAO to ascertain what impact this committee has had. It is our understanding that the DCRE continues to consult with this Reference Committee.

In addition, there are now five Northern Community Reference Panels established to include community members in decision-making for northern children. These panels work with DCRE officials and others to plan effectively for children and to try to prevent the need for children to be removed from their homes or their communities.

So, are the people who care more involved in 2005 than they were in 2000? It is difficult to say with certainty that this is the case. Some very powerful examples of increased involvement by First Nations and the DCRE in relation to some specific advocacy cases, in particular "Baby Andy" give hope for the future. The process used to review the services provided to Baby Andy was very inclusive. The recommendations were far-reaching and impactful and were developed collaboratively. This gives us a model for inclusion that could be replicated in other difficult situations.

Reduce Child Poverty

Government reports a number of changes that positively affect vulnerable and disadvantaged families in Saskatchewan. Changes in taxes, housing, access to health benefits, and employment supplements all contribute to reducing the negative impacts of poverty on children in Saskatchewan. The percentage of Saskatchewan children living in households below the [before tax] Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) poverty line fell from 21.5% (58,000 children) in 1989 to 17.5% (45,000) in 1998, rose slightly to 18.7% (43,000) in 2002 (Social Policy Research Unit, November 2004). An after tax LICO poverty line comparison indicates a greater decrease in the child poverty level, decreasing from 17.5% (45,000) in 1998 to 8.8% (21,000) in 2002 (Statistics Canada, 2004). Saskatchewan's rate is traditionally higher than the national average and in 2002 was the fourth highest provincial rate in Canada. From this we can see that regardless of the specific yearly rate, there continue to be a large number of real children living in poverty in our province each year. While there have been many positive steps taken to address child poverty, we must continue to find ways to expand these initiatives to reduce the actual number of children living in poverty.

Invest Earlier in Children and Families

The increased investments in early learning and child care introduced in the past five years and anticipated in the upcoming year are significant. Saskatchewan has an Early Childhood Development Strategy and the KidsFirst Program is a cornerstone of that strategy. The early childhood programs currently in place are still not universally accessible in our province and there continues to be a need to address this problem. The Federal/Provincial/Territorial Early Learning and Care Framework is expected to outline how increased investments in early childhood will be made. In 2004 a series of discussion forums on Early Learning and Care resulted in the report *Making Children a Priority: Saskatchewan Listens* (SIDRU, 2004). A full plan for how Saskatchewan will invest the early learning and care dollars is expected in the spring of 2005.

Don't Expect a Quick Fix

Five years ago we said "Don't expect a quick fix!" and while we truly believed that the changes that were required could not happen overnight, we cannot also forget what five years means in the life of a child. Overall, there have been positive changes, especially to policy, that we believe have addressed some of the complex issues identified in the Review. However, there is still much to be done. There are still significant challenges in relation to child welfare and children in care. Each year the CAO continues to receive and review a number of very difficult and tragic concerns related to individual children or groups of children. This must stop. We know that government officials, First Nations service providers and leaders and community members also want this to stop. In many ways we are still failing to take responsible action with and for vulnerable children and their families and we must remain vigilant and passionate about making change and making a difference.

LISTEN to Their Voices! If you do nothing else when you read the Child and Youth in Care Review, I urge you to really listen to the voices of the courageous and passionate people who shared their stories.... find a way to take action to make the lives of all children, especially those who live in government care, better.

(Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate, April 2000)

The infant mortality rate "has been considered the single most comprehensive measure of health in a society" (Wen, 2003). As of 2001, Saskatchewan continued to have the highest infant mortality rate in Canada next to Nunavut and the Northwest Territories at 5.5 per 1000 births (Statistics Canada, 2005). Saskatchewan also had the highest provincial rates of injury-related deaths for children 1 to 4 and youth 15 to 19 years of age and had the highest provincial injury hospitalization rates for children 1 to 19 years (Canadian Institute of Child Heath, 2000).

Children from poor families are more likely to experience health and other problems. In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal children are more likely to live in poor families, making Aboriginal children even more vulnerable to health problems. "Aboriginal people may be at a higher risk of being the victims of injuries due to their often isolated residence, their physical environment, crowded and dilapidated housing conditions, lifestyle and poor social conditions. [In addition the] Aboriginal population appears to have injury patterns that are similar to those of the total Canadian population but with higher rates (Health Canada, 2001).

We know that infant mortality and child injury rates are only windows into understanding the health of our child population, but these figures give us food for thought. Saskatchewan has embraced a population health approach to understanding the determinants of health. A population health approach recognize that health is not a state, but rather a capacity or resource. Changes in population health require a focus on both social context and social policy. While improving various programs and services for certain children and families is clearly important, there is a continued need to develop a model for service delivery that best addresses multiple determinants of health within the context of a clearly defined vision for Saskatchewan children.

THEN...

1991... Saskatchewan Infant Mortality Rate (Rates per 1,000 live births)... 8.2

(Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps, 2002)

Healthy

Children must be protected from preventable disease and disability and unhealthy practices. They must enjoy self-esteem, self-acceptance, healthy lifestyles, and healthy social and physical environments.

The infant mortality rate "has been considered the single most comprehensive measure of health in a society" (Wen, 2003). As of 2001, Saskatchewan continued to have the highest infant mortality rate in Canada next to Nunavut and the Northwest Territories at 5.5 per 1000 births (Statistics Canada, 2005). Saskatchewan also had the highest provincial rates of injury-related deaths for children 1 to 4 and youth 15 to 19 years of age and had the highest provincial injury hospitalization rates for children 1 to 19 years (Canadian Institute of Child Heath, 2000).

Children from poor families are more likely to experience health and other problems. In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal children are more likely to live in poor families, making Aboriginal children even more vulnerable to health problems. "Aboriginal people may be at a higher risk of being the victims of injuries due to their often isolated residence, their physical environment, crowded and dilapidated housing conditions, lifestyle and poor social conditions. [In addition the], Aboriginal population appears to have injury patterns that are similar to those of the total Canadian population but with higher rates" (Health Canada, 2001).

We know that infant mortality and child injury rates are only windows into understanding the health of our child population, but these figures give us food for thought. Saskatchewan has embraced a population health approach to understanding the determinants of health. A population health approach recognize that health is not a state, but rather a capacity or resource. Changes in population health require a focus on both social context and social policy. While improving various programs and services for certain children and families is clearly important, there is a continued need to develop a model for service delivery that best addresses multiple determinants of health within the context of a clearly defined vision for Saskatchewan children.

THEN...

1991... Saskatchewan Infant Mortality Rate (Rates per 1,000 live births)... 8.2

(Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps, 2002)

According to Saskatchewan Health, mental health services as provided through the regional health authorities, treat 4,500 children and adolescents annually, which represent only 10% of the 42,488 children and adolescents estimated to have a mental disorder.

(Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office, April 2004)

NOW...

2001... Saskatchewan Infant Mortality Rate (Rates per 1,000 live births)... 5.5
(Statistics Canada, 2005)

CAO Actions

Access to Mental Health Services for Children and Youth

1996... Since 1996, the CAO has been working to raise awareness for the need to improve services for children and youth who require mental health services in Saskatchewan. The issue was raised in several CAO annual reports, the Children and Youth in Care Review and through the CAO child death reviews.

2004... In April 2004, the CAO published *It's Time for a Plan for Children's Mental Health*. The report was intended to build a broader understanding of the issues faced in the delivery of mental health services for children and youth in Saskatchewan. In the report, the CAO recommended "That Saskatchewan Health, in consultation with stakeholders, develop and implement a comprehensive plan to ensure that mental health services are provided to Saskatchewan children, youth and families in a manner consistent with what is known about best practices." The CAO is pleased to report that in January 2005, Saskatchewan Health responded by outlining the steps they have taken to begin to implement this recommendation, including stakeholder consultations and the establishment of an intersectoral advisory committee. Saskatchewan Health has indicated to the CAO that they hope to have a framework and draft multi-year plan, indicating major directions for implementation, by Fall 2005.

Review All Child Deaths

2003... In 2003, the CAO recommended that government review, in some systematic fashion, the deaths of all children. To date, there is still no mechanism in Saskatchewan to review the deaths of all children. Right now, in Saskatchewan, only some deaths are reviewed and to varying degrees, by different organizations. There is not one organization in Saskatchewan which analyzes data regarding all child deaths. An increased review of all child deaths will assist in developing greater understanding of the causes of child deaths, identify gaps that must be addressed, and guide policy and decision-makers to improve the services provided to all of our children. Without these reviews, we will continue with the presently fragmented review system.

2004... In March 2004, Saskatchewan Health funded a Child Death Review Forum. Stakeholders from across the province discussed a Saskatchewan "all-death" review model. Based on the Forum results, the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute produced a draft model and process for the review of all child deaths. Saskatchewan Health has indicated to the CAO that they "will continue to work in partnership to more fully explore the operational, jurisdictional and legislative implications of an expanded child death review ... and to assess the extent to which the additional information obtained through an expanded review will contribute to the objective of reducing children's deaths." While these efforts are positive, the CAO is still hopeful that this exploration results in the review of all child deaths.

Culturally Conneted

Children must be given the opportunity to value, preserve and participate in the life of their cultural community and to respect the cultural communities of others. For the Indian and Métis peoples, positive cultural identity and connection to their culture are priority needs.

"...in assessing what measures are appropriate to implement the rights recognized in the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] for Aboriginal children, due regard must be paid to not denying their right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their religion and to use their own language."

(UNICEF, 2002)

Generations of Aboriginal children and youth are waiting for Canada to keep its promises made in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *World Fit for Children* and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* so that adjectives like risk, vulnerable and marginalized are no longer used to persistently describe any group of children in Canada — including Aboriginal children.

(Blackstock et al. 2004)

The importance of all children having opportunities to learn about, live within and honour the life of their cultural community cannot be understated. This becomes particularly important for Aboriginal children where historical and ongoing factors have presented major barriers to sustained cultural connectedness.

The importance of children maintaining meaningful connections with their families and culture has been a priority of the Children's Advocate Office since its inception in 1994. We continue to advocate that the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people must be taken into account for the harmonious development of the child (UNCRC, 1991).

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CAO Actions

Provincial Meetings with FNCFS Agencies

2003... In the fall of 2003, the CAO began meeting with each of the 17 FNCFS agencies in Saskatchewan. To date, the CAO was able to meet with 15 agencies and a total of 196 staff. The goals of the meetings were to foster a better understanding with agency staff about the authority, mandate and goals of the Office and share information on current CAO projects and initiatives. The CAO also wanted to hear from agency staff, any suggestions for ways to advance the services offered by the CAO. Excellent questions were asked and this dialogue has assisted in furthering the understanding between and the development of a more positive relationship between the CAO and the agencies.

Advocacy and Northern Saskatchewan

2000... Concerned that residents of northern Saskatchewan are under-represented among our complainants, between November 2000 and January 2002, the Provincial Ombudsman, the Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission and the Children's Advocate visited nine northern Saskatchewan communities. Public consultations were held in each community to hear from residents their concerns about rights, fairness and equity and learn how each office might provide more effective service. The issues raised at these meetings continue to be a focus of the work of the CAO as we strive to create a stronger connection with northern communities.

Children/Youth in Care by Constitutional Status Under *The Child and Family Services Act*, March 31, 1999 and March 31, 2004[1]

	Metis		Non-Status		Status		Unknown[5]		Non-Aboriginal		TOTAL	
	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004
Total in Care	166	111	76	40	1566	1814	63	48	839	785	2710	2798
16/17 Year-Old Program[2]	17	7	6	4	50	87	38	18	209	167	320	283
Total Children in Care under *The Child and Family Services Act*[3]	183	118	82	44	1616	1901	101	66	1048	952	3030	3081
Total Children in Care under *The Child and Family Services Act*[3] under the Authority of FNCFS agencies[4]											951[6]	1133
Total Children in Care under DCRE and FNCFS agencies											3981	4214

Note 1: Excludes children in care of the Community Living Division.

Note 2: Includes only those youth in this program under a Section 10 agreement. Services for 16 and 17 year-olds became a separate program in 1995-96. It combines child welfare, youth services and income support for youth and provides a single entry point for services. Because it was a new program, tracking systems were in development. There was initial reporting of the youth being served in 1996, incomplete reporting in 1997, then full reporting from 1998 onward.

Note 3: The total children in care under *The Child and Family Services Act* does not include children brought into care by FNCFS agencies.

Note 4: INAC has indicated to the CAO that "prior to fall of 1998 INAC was implementing an electronic Child Care Information System. Statistical accuracy for children as per specific day of care was reduced prior to the electronic system. When CIMD submission is done mid July sometimes stats are understated – due to care records that have not yet been processed."

Note 5: Unknown includes children who were of Aboriginal ancestry, however the constitutional status for the children was unknown.

Note 6: The vast majority of these children would be of Aboriginal ancestry, with the majority of them Status; however, the constitutional status of these children is not known.

Sources: Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment, personal communication, February 12, 2005 and February 28, 2005); Saskatchewan Social Services, March, 1999); Quarterly Statistical Reports. Regina: Author. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, personal communication, January 23, 2004 & February 14, 2005)

Socially Responsible

Children must be given the opportunity to be productive, to make a meaningful contribution to others, to participate in the life of the community, to value others for their individual and cultural diversity, to have a social and environmental conscience, and to be held accountable for their actions under the law.

> ***"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death."***
>
> Kofi Annan (United Nations, 2004).

Affirming the full and effective participation of children and youth in society and in decision-making was, in 1994 viewed with scepticism by many. Now, in 2005, in nearly every region of Saskatchewan and in most child-serving agencies, the principle that young people are entitled to express their views on all matters that affect them and to have those views taken seriously is promoted and respected. While implementation of this principle into practice is still a challenge, youth participation as a procedural right has gained common acceptance. Young people are influencing policy decisions and outcomes, and are beginning to shape practice from their own unique perspectives. This is indeed very encouraging.

Some people still wonder what benefits youth participation can bring in a system where including youth takes a lot of time and some additional resources. From the perspective of eight provincially-appointed child and youth advocates in Canada: "The voice and participation of youth is essential for the promotion of their development and acquisition of their entitlements. Article 12 of the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] expresses that young people should be free to voice their opinions and to assert their views on matters that affect them. Young people actively engaged and involved in decision-making become invested in their well-being which promotes self mastery" (CCPCYA, 2005).

THEN...

The average daily count of youth in custody for 1996/97 was 404.

(Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, 1997)

Youth participation in decision-making has been raised by the CAO as a particular concern in relation to youth who reside in secure or open custody facilities. In 1999, for example, the CAO pointed out that the need for standards in youth custody facilities had been raised in every annual report since 1995. The CAO repeatedly pointed out that there were significant inconsistencies between procedures and treatment of youth at different facilities and that many of the facilities were not meeting basic standards of care. The need for an enhanced appeal process that included the right of the young people to have a voice in the decisions being made about their care, was identified. The CAO advocated that all youth residents must be informed of the procedures and that these must be accessible to them every day of every week.

Since that report, new standards have been introduced in all provincially-operated facilities, and these standards include an appeal process that is more inclusive of the voices of these young people. The number of contacts to the CAO from youth in young offender facilities peaked in 1999 (210 calls) and have been steadily declining since that time (105 calls in 2004). We believe this decrease can be attributed, in part, to the introduction of new policies and facility standards.

NOW...

The average daily count of youth in custody for 2003/04 was 260.

(Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety, 2004)

CAO Actions

Youth Justice

1995... As early as 1995, the CAO identified the need to address the conditions for youth in residential facilities in Saskatchewan. In addition, the CAO identified the need for increased supports for young people at earlier stages in their lives to prevent and reduce youth crime.

1999... In January 1999, the CAO completed a background paper, *Issues Affecting Youth in Conflict with the Law*. In the CAO 1999 annual report, the CAO emphasized that there was "a need for action to provide quality care in a safe environment" and to introduce consistent standards of care for youth in custody.

2000... In 2000, the CAO conducted two investigations of unfair and unreasonable treatment of youth in custody. The CAO made 15 recommendations regarding the need for a policy review, compliance with policy and the provision of service. In response to these investigations and previously raised issues, six new and revised policies were introduced in December 2000.

2003... In the CAO 2003 Annual Report, the CAO stated that we were "satisfied that these new policies, combined with the implementation of a quality assurance process, are consistent with the desired outcome we identified in 2002 [regarding standards]." Thus the CAO systemic file regarding standards was closed as resolved.

Youth Participation

1998... The CAO brought together young people from across Saskatchewan to discuss ways for youth to participate in decisions that affect them. This group formed the Provincial Youth Delegation (PYD), a group of young people aged 15 to 21 years, which over their six-year association with the CAO (1998 to 2003) developed and participated in numerous activities noted in this report.

2000... In Fall of 2000, the PYD partnered with the CAO and others to host the *Mind the Gap* conference and discuss strategies for effective youth involvement. The youth made recommendations in seven areas. Some progress has been made on some recommendations, including the development of a provincial youth website and the development of the government's Provincial Youth Advisory Committee (PYAC).

Knowledgeable & Skilled

Children must receive educational opportunities that give them the skills and abilities to develop to their potential. In order to participate effectively in a changing society, they must be given the opportunity to achieve literacy, knowledge, social and life skills.

> ***"Schools need to be able to meet the learning needs of all children. If we kick kids out, we are sentencing them to bleak life prospects."***
>
> (Saskatchewan Government, 2002)

In order for children to receive educational opportunities that will help them develop to their full potential, children must be welcomed and included in the learning environment.

In October 1998, the Saskatchewan Council on Children recommended that: "The Government of Saskatchewan undertake a public discussion involving all stakeholders (parents, children, educators, Aboriginal communities, human service providers, community organizations, and businesses) to determine the role public education could play as a focus for holistically meeting the needs of children" (Saskatchewan Council on Children, 1998). From May 1999 to February 2001 the Task Force on the Role of the Schools developed a framework from which they hoped to make this recommendation a reality.

The School[PLUS] initiative, launched in February 2002, marked the beginning of what was meant to be a significant change in how Saskatchewan schools, other human service agencies and community members work together to support children and families. This School[PLUS] model was intended to be a mechanism through which the well-being and educational success of Saskatchewan's children and youth was ensured. Government endorsed the vision for School[PLUS] proposed by the Task Force in February 2001 and identified two primary functions for schools today:

- "to educate children and youth developing the whole child, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically; and,
- to support service delivery—schools serve as centres at the community level for the delivery of appropriate social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services for children and their families." (Saskatchewan Government, 2002).

THEN...

1995... *The Education Act (1995)* did not prohibit the use of corporal punishment in Saskatchewan schools.

Government promised with School[PLUS] that: "*All children and youth will be welcome and supported in schools; all schools will be centres of community, open and inclusive; teachers will be able to focus on teaching; government departments will collaborate more effectively; resources will be reallocated to support the vision of School Plus; and outcome measures will inform continuous program and service improvement.*"

(Saskatchewan Government, 2002)

The CAO made a submission to the Task Force before the completion of its final report and also to Saskatchewan Learning following the release of the Provincial Response. The CAO fully supports the goals of School[PLUS] and remains very interested in how government intends to meet their commitments to "What will be different?"

The CAO identified two issues in relation to the proposed School[PLUS] model. The CAO recommended that Saskatchewan Learning amend *The Education Act (1995)* to prohibit the use of corporal punishment in Saskatchewan schools and identified a need for independent review and appeal processes when disagreements occur between a student or parent and the school.

When the School[PLUS] initiative was endorsed by government, interagency responsibility was identified as a priority for action and the former Saskatchewan Council on Children was restructured to become the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth. The Children's Advocate has participated, on an ex-officio and non-voting basis, on both of these Council's since 1995. Unfortunately, the current Council has not met since June 2004 and there does not appear to be a plan to revitalize this interagency/community partnership. In addition, it is very difficult to ascertain what progress has been made by government to achieve the goals outlined in the School[PLUS] model. This will be a priority for the CAO in 2005 and forward as we continue to explore how the goal for all children to have access to the supports they need for school and life success are actualized in practice.

NOW...

2004... *The Education Act (1995)* has still not been amended to prohibit the use of corporal punishment in Saskatchewan schools.

CAO Actions

Dispute Resolution in the School Environment

1995... The CAO requested that government develop a dispute resolution and appeal process. This request was raised again in the 1996 Annual Report.

1997... Section 186.1(1) of *The Education Act (1995)* was amended to create a resolution process regarding disputes related to a student with a disability.

1999... The CAO raised the issue of dispute resolution with the Task Force on the Role of School.

2001... The CAO completed an interprovincial/territorial comparison of the availability of dispute resolution processes in Canada.

2002... The CAO requested that Saskatchewan Learning ensure that all school divisions have policies regarding section 148 of *The Education Act* requiring established procedures "for the purposes of investigation and mediation on any difference or conflicts."

2003... In May 2003, Learning reported to the CAO that 97% of Saskatchewan school divisions had policies in place or pending that outline the mechanisms for resolving concerns.

Corporal Punishment

1996... In 1996, the CAO recommended "That the Department of Learning amend *The Education Act* to prohibit the use of corporal punishment in Saskatchewan schools."

2005... In February 2005, after many communications between 1996 and 2005, the Minister of Learning responded that they "continue to work toward amendments to *The Education Act* that will explicitly prohibit corporal punishment."

Youth Voice in Education

2003... In 2003, the PYD released their report *Blueprints for Change: Building Partnership-Based Education*. The report's 15 recommendations call on government, community leaders and the private sector to engage youth and enhance the high-school education system in Saskatchewan.

Pierceland Central School,
Social Awareness Day, November 20, 1997

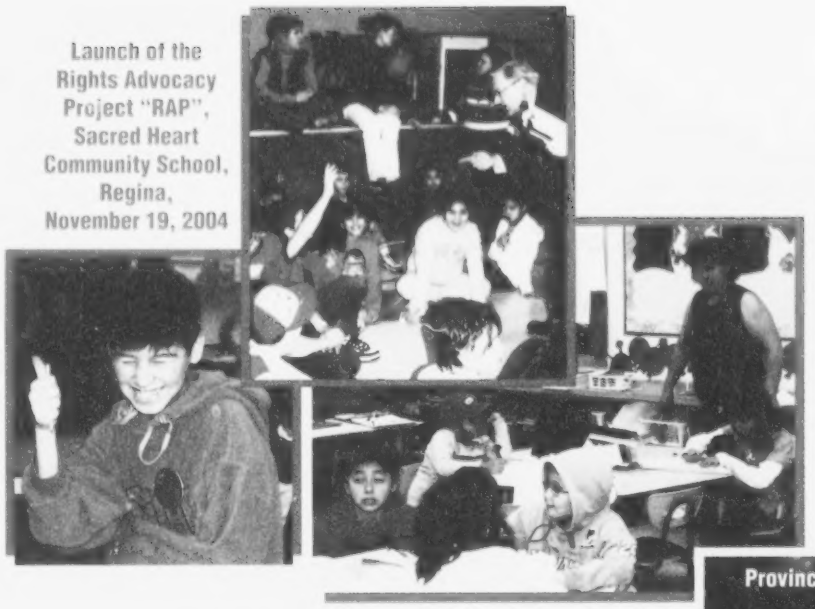
Canadian Council of Provincial Child and
Youth Advocates and National
Child Death Review Meeting, June 1999

Provincial Youth Roundtable, August 1998

Youth Focus Group, October, 2002

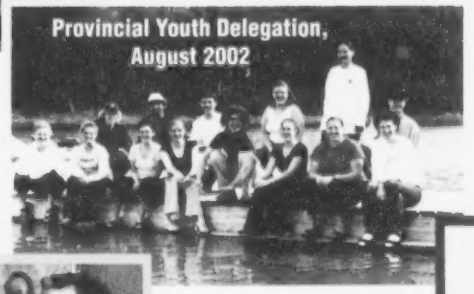
Mind the Gap,
November 18-20, 2000

Release of the *Children and Youth in Care Review: LISTEN to Their Voices*, April 2000



Launch of the Rights Advocacy Project "RAP", Sacred Heart Community School, Regina, November 19, 2004

South Bay Youth Conference, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 2002, 2003, 2004



Provincial Youth Delegation, August 2002

Release of *Blueprints for Change*, November 2003

10 Year Overview

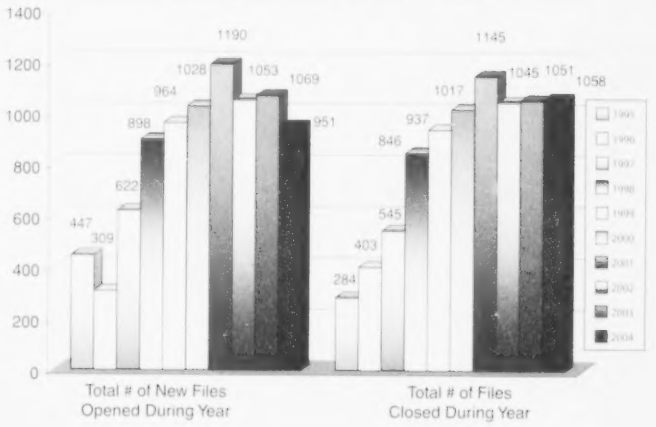
10 Year Overview of Individual & Group Advocacy

Assistance Provided

During our ten-year history, the CAO opened 8331 individual advocacy files. Since 1999, the number of requests for service that the CAO responds to annually stabilized at around 1000 calls per year.

During 2004, the CAO closed 1058 individual advocacy files. This represents an average of 88 files per month.

Concerns Raised with Children's Advocate Office
January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2004



Type of Assistance

The CAO offers a continuum of advocacy services to the children, youth, parents and others who contact the Office requesting assistance. Over the past ten years, the CAO, has enhanced and streamlined the individual advocacy process to make it easier for people to understand the services offered within this continuum of service.

Self-Advocacy Strategies

Self-advocacy strategies include providing information on government policies/procedures and existing appeal processes, along with ideas the caller can use to resolve their issues.

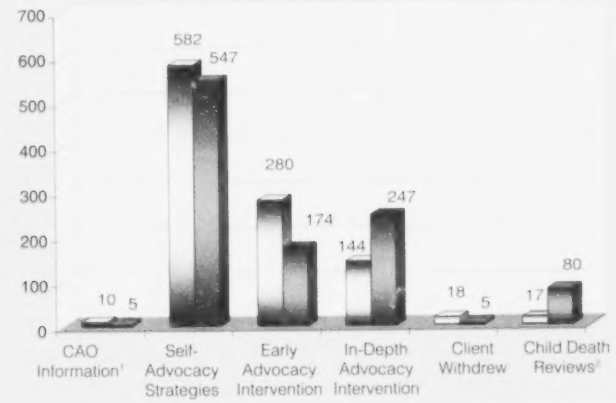
Early Advocacy Intervention

Early advocacy intervention includes making initial calls, conducting preliminary negotiations with decision-makers and providing further self-advocacy strategies.

In-Depth Advocacy Intervention

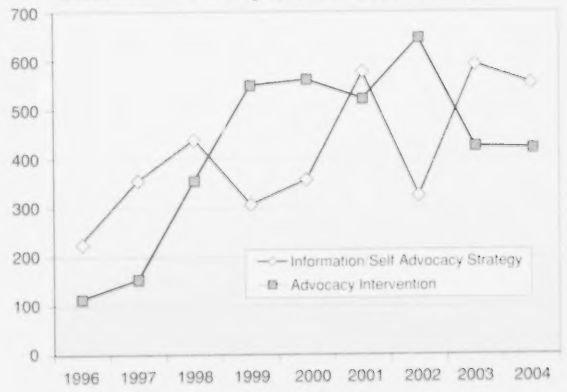
If issues are not resolved using either of these earlier methods, in-depth advocacy intervention may be required. This next level of intervention most often includes a face-to-face meeting with the child/youth or others and may include: in-depth coaching in self-advocacy; liaison with multiple government departments and organizations; facilitation of and participation in case conferences and meetings; or, on a limited basis, conducting formal investigations.

Type of Assistance Provided by Children's Advocate Office
Closed Files – January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2004



Only includes those requests for CAO information handled by Advocacy Services and not general requests for informational material handled by the CAO Administrative Team.
In March 2004, the DCRE amended its Death of a Child Youth Policy. Due to the changes in the policy, the CAO agreed to apply the updated policy to all deaths that occurred after January 1, 2000. As a result, in 2004 reviews were not conducted and the files were closed on 60 deaths from 2000 forward.

Type of Assistance Provided by Children's Advocate Office
Closed Files – January 1, 1996 to December 31, 2004

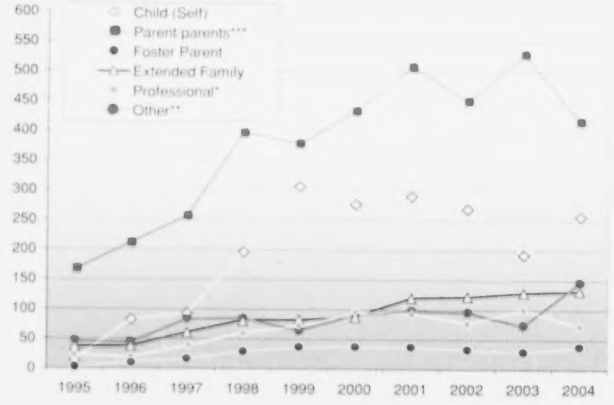


Only includes those requests for CAO information handled by Advocacy Services and not general requests for informational material handled by the CAO Administrative Team.

Who is Calling?

Children/youth, as well as others involved in their lives, bring issues to the attention of the CAO. The individuals contacting the CAO have remained relatively consistent over the last ten years. Parents requesting, service, on behalf of their child are the largest contact group, representing, on average, 45 percent of all calls each year (High: 1995-58%; Low: 2004-39%). Children/youth are consistently the next largest contact group representing, on average, 24 percent of the total requests for service each year (High: 1999-33%; Low: 1995-5%). In 2004, calls from children represented 24 percent of all contacts. Requests for service from extended family members are the third largest contact group, representing on average 11 percent annually (12% in 2004). Direct contacts from foster parents has remained unchanged over the history of the CAO, representing approximately three percent annually.

Relationship of Contact Person to Child or Group of Children
Closed Files – January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2004



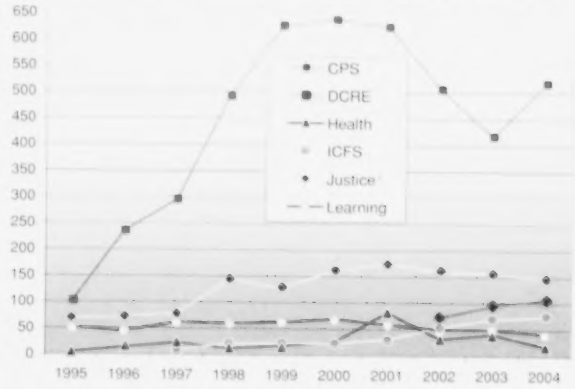
* Includes social workers with the DCRE as well as staff of FNCFS agencies.
** Includes interested third parties such as band representatives, babysitters, neighbours, etc. Also includes those individuals who do not have a relationship with a specific child.
*** Includes those individuals that have a professional relationship with the child, such as health care professionals, judges, community-home operators, teachers, etc.

Why are They Calling?

Over the ten-year history of the CAO, the majority of concerns focused on the Department of Community Resources and Employment (DCRE, formerly Social Services). Calls regarding the DCRE were the lowest in the first full year of operation (99 calls in 1995), with the largest number of calls received in 2000 (639).

From 1995 to 2004, concerns regarding the DCRE focused primarily on two areas: the provision of family services and young offender (YO) services. Other concerns raised, although very low in numbers, have included concerns regarding income security, community living, child death reviews and other miscellaneous issues.

Concerns Raised with Children's Advocate Office Listed by Government Department or Agency[3]
Closed Files – January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2004



* Represents department & health authorities.
** Represents department & school boards.
*** Annual calls for Multiple Department Concerns, Federal Government, Other Provincial Government Departments, Police and No Specific Department identified (NSD) are not included in this graph. Calls in these areas each represented less than 2% of calls each year, with the exception of NSD which ranged between 4% (1996) and 13% (2003). NSD represents requests for general information about services for children; requests for services where a referral was made to a department agency not under the scope of the CAO; or where the number of calls concerning a department agency are too small to report. 9% of the 2004 calls were categorized as NSD.

Factoring out the concerns raised regarding young offenders services, the number of concerns regarding the DCRE has remained fairly consistent over the last few years at approximately 450 calls per year, representing 49 percent of all calls to the office annually. In 2004, the CAO received 519[1] calls concerning the DCRE. Of these 519 calls, 78 percent concerned the provision of family services.

In April 2002, the Department of Corrections and Public Safety (CPS) was created and responsibility for young offender services was transferred from the DCRE to CPS. Calls concerning young offenders were at their highest in 1999 (210 calls) and have been steadily declining since that time. In 2004, the CAO received 105 calls regarding CPS, representing 10 percent of all contacts to the office.

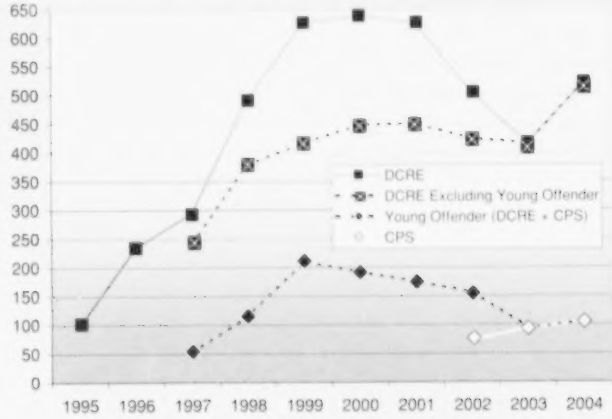
Calls concerning the Department of Justice are consistently the second largest group of concerns raised with the CAO, representing, on average, 16 percent of all calls each year. Custody and access issues consitute the majority of Justice related concerns. The CAO does not have the authority to review decisions of the court. However, individuals contacting the CAO are provided with self-advocacy strategies and referral information to assist them in resolving their concern. In 2004, custody and access issues represented 13 percent of all calls to the CAO and 96 percent of all Justice calls.

Calls concerning First Nations Child and Family Service (FNCFS) agencies have been slowly increasing over the past few years (23 in 2000; 31 in 2001; 54 in 2002; 70 in 2003, 75 in 2004). We believe that the increase in the number of calls may be a result of a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the CAO with respect to FNCFS agencies by both the agencies themselves and the people they serve. There are currently 17 First Nations Child and Family Service (FNCFS) agencies in Saskatchewan providing services to children and their families under *The Child and Family Services Act*. Calls regarding FNCFS agencies are similar to those calls received concerning the DCRE, Family and Youth Services.

[1]Note: In 2004, 60 of the 519 calls were child death reviews that were closed without being reviewed as per the March 2004 change in the DCRE Death of a Child/Youth Policy.

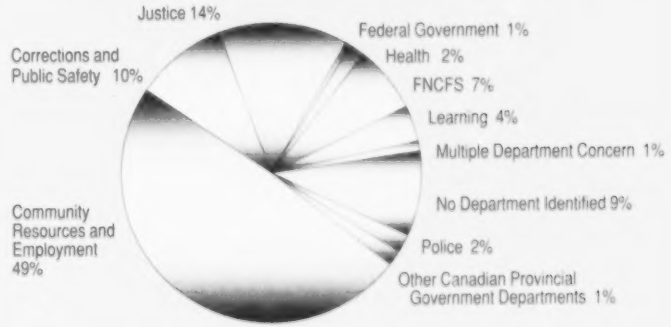
Concerns Raised with Children's Advocate Office Regarding DCRE & CPS

Closed Files – January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2004



Concerns Raised with Children's Advocate Office Listed by Government Department[1] or Agency, 2004 (n=1058)

Closed Files – January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004



[1]Definitions for Health, Learning and No Department Identified as the same as those listed on the previous page.

Administration

Staff as at December 2004 (CA plus 12.15 FTE's)

Glenda Cooney, Deputy Children's Advocate
Vanesa Climenhaga, Advocate
Bliss Tenning, Intern

John Brand, Director of Advocacy Services
Connie Braun, Advocate (Term)
Rhonda Johannson, Advocate
Marcel St. Onge, Advocate
Shaun Soonias, Advocate
Elaine Thomas, Advocate
Roxane Schury, Advocate (On Leave)

Sharon Chapman, Director of Communications
Gillian Gough, RAP Co-ordinator (Contract)
Katrina Kindrachuk, RAP Co-ordinator (Contract)

Bernie Rodier, Director of Administration
Sandi Elliott, Administrative Assistant
Penny Fairburn, Administrative Assistant
Bev Martin, Administrative Assistant (Casual)
Caroline Sookocheff, Executive Administrative Assistant
Gordon Mayer, General Counsel (Provincial Ombudsman & CAO)

Children's Advocate Budget

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Personal Services	821,000	906,000	869,000
Contractual Services	153,000	147,000	144,000
Advertising, Printing & Publishing	26,000	35,000	30,000
Travel & Business	107,000	109,000	95,000
Supplies & Services	11,000	7,000	7,000
Capital Assets	0	3,000	5,000
TOTAL	$1,118,000	$1,207,000	1,150,000

Strategic Plan

During 2004, the CAO developed a new multi-year strategic plan[1] that incorporates financial, human resources, information technology, capital and communications planning. A summary of this plan is outlined below.

Goals

The CAO has identified five overarching goals for the organization. These goals represent the vision and mandate of the CAO. The goals outline the types of activities that the organization will undertake in order to promote the protection of the rights of children and ensure that children receive the level of service that they need and are entitled to from the Government of Saskatchewan. CAO goals guide the direction that the organization takes in its relationship with children, other stakeholders, relevant agencies and the public at large.

1. Advocate for the interests and well-being of children.
2. Promote public accountability through comprehensive investigations.
3. Educate people on the interests and well-being of children.
4. Affect systemic change to promote the interests and well-being of children.
5. Provide high-quality service.

Priority Areas

The operational activities of the CAO focus on five key priority areas. Each of these areas contributes in a significant way to the CAO's ability to identify key issues, increase awareness of challenges, promote systemic change, and advocate with and on behalf of children and youth.

1. Individual and group advocacy
2. Investigations
3. Public education and youth voice
4. Systemic advocacy
5. Administration

[1]For a complete overview of the CAO strategic plan, please consult our website at www.saskcao.ca

Operations Model

The following operational chart demonstrates the inter-relationship of each of the CAO Priority Areas. The Operations Model also highlights the commitment that the organization has to the central activity of Systemic Advocacy. All operational and administrative functions of the CAO contribute to the advancement of systemic change.

Priority Area Goals

Each priority area within the strategic plan has developed a set of specific goals, objectives and strategies:

Individual and Group Advocacy Goal: All children and youth will receive the services they are entitled to within current government policy and provincial legislation.

Investigations Goal: Provincial government departments and agencies will be accountable in providing services to the children of Saskatchewan.

Public Education and Youth Voice Initiatives Goal: An educated and supportive Saskatchewan public (including children, youth and adults) that respects the interests and well-being of children.

Systemic Advocacy Goal: Advance systemic change to promote the interests and well-being of children and youth and improve the quality of services provided to children and youth in Saskatchewan.

Administration Goal: Manage the performance of our duties and functions effectively.

Delivering the Message

The CAO produces numerous public education materials to raise awareness of the role of the CAO and to educate the public on the issues facing Saskatchewan children. The CAO distributes an estimated 30,000 informational items every year.

In December 2002, the CAO launched a new website to provide easy access to programs and services available from the CAO. During 2004, use of the site nearly doubled over the previous year. In 2004, the site received 159,709 hits (101,948 in 2003), an average of 436 per day (279 in 2003). Also in 2004, the site had 7,670 visits (3328 in 2003) and had 2,706 unique visitors (1193 in 2003) (Webtrends, 2005).

In addition, each year the CAO makes approximately 100 presentations relating to the interests and well-being of children. Over the 10 year history of the office, the Children's Advocate and staff have made nearly 1000 presentations. Following are the presentations and workshops that were completed in 2004.

Government Departments or Agencies (excluding meetings)

- Family Support Centre, Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, Regional and Service Centres: Fort Qu Appelle, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert
- Saskatchewan Health, Mental Health Services, Child & Youth Services: North Battleford, Saskatoon and Yorkton
- Saskatchewan Justice, Prosecution District, Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Learning, Weyburn
- Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly: Saskatchewan MLAs and Internship Program, Regina

First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies

- Agency Chiefs Tribal Council Child and Family Services, Spiritwood
- Ahtahkakoop Child and Family Services, Ahtahkakoop First Nation
- Athabasca Denesuline Child and Family Services, Stony Rapids
- Kanaweyihimitowin (Beardys) and Family Services, Duck Lake
- Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services, Battleford
- Meadow Lake Tribal Council Child and Family Services
- Montreal Lake Child and Family Services
- Nicahpanak Child and Family Services, Pakwaw Lake
- Nehiyow Awasis Siceca Cistinna (Sturgeon & Wahpeton) Child and Family Services, Prince Albert
- Touchwood Child and Family Services, Punnichy
- Yorkton Tribal Council Indian Child and Family Services

Conferences, Public Consultations and Annual Meeting

- *5th Annual National Child and Family Services* Conference. Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency. Calgary
- *10th Biennial Symposium on Violence and Aggression*. Correctional Service of Canada. Saskatoon
- *2004 Saskatchewan Women's* Conference. Saskatoon
- *Adopt a Grandchild* Fundraising Event. Council on Aging. Saskatoon
- *Advocacy and Dispute Resolution*. Teachers' Institute. Saskatoon
- *Assessment and Treatment of Anxiety Disorders in Adults and Children*. Psychological Society of Saskatchewan 2004 Spring Institute. Saskatoon
- AWASIS Conference 2004. Saskatoon
- *Building Partnerships to Plan for Children's Mental Health* Regional Forum. Saskatchewan Health. Tisdale
- Cambridge Bay Childcare Society *Annual Daycare Dinner and Auction*. Cambridge Bay. Nunavut
- *Having a Voice in Dealing with Children*. Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. Prince Albert
- Juvenile Justice. Roundtable Discussion. Regina
- *Making Children's Rights Work* Conference. International Bureau for Children's Rights. Montreal
- *Northern Justice* Symposium III. Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities. Prince Albert
- *Provincial Client and Family Advocacy* Forum. Saskatchewan Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. Regina
- Rainbow Youth Centre Symposium. Regina
- *Saskatchewan Child Death Review* Forum. Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps. Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network AGM. Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan First Nations Early Childhood Conference. Saskatoon
- Save the Children Symposium. Saskatoon
- *Telling the Story of Canada's Children* Roundtable. National Children's Alliance. Kingston
- *Understanding the Early Years* Community Forum. Saskatoon

Post-Secondary Education Students

- College of Law. University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon
- Department of Social Work. University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon
- Faculty of Social Work. University of Regina. Saskatoon
- Social Work Class. Northlands College. LaRonge
- Social Work Class. Parkland Community College. Yorkton

Community Groups and Agencies

- Aboriginal and Northern Justice Initiatives. Community Police Board Training. La Ronge. La Loche. Stony Rapids
- Battleford's Interval House
- CUPE #1948. Saskatoon
- Early Childhood Intervention Program. North Battleford
- Early Childhood Psychologists. Saskatoon
- Regina Foster Families Association
- Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority
- Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. Prince Albert
- Saskatoon Association for Community Living (Parents Forever Group). Saskatoon

Youth

- Cumberland House Community School
- Drumming Hill Youth Centre. North Battleford
- Ile-a-la-Crosse Community School
- North Battleford Youth Centre
- Orcadia Youth Residence. Yorkton
- Paul Dojack Youth Centre. Regina
- Prince Albert Therapeutic Group Home
- Prince Albert Youth Residence
- Ranch Ehrlo. Pilot Butte
- Red Pheasant School
- South Bay Youth Camp. Ile-a-la-Crosse

Rights Advocacy Project Workshops

- Battlefords School Division #118. McKitrick Elementary School. Grade 7. North Battleford
- Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division. Rossignol Elementary. Grade 6. Ile-a-la-Crosse
- Northern Lights School Division. Charlebois Elementary School. Grade 7. Cumberland House
- Regina Public School Division. Wascana Community School. Grade 5/6. Regina
- Regina RCSSD. Sacred Heart Community School. Grade 7. Regina
- St. Paul's Roman Catholic School Division. St. Michael School Grade 6/7
- Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. Meath Park School. Grade 6. Meath Park
- Saskatoon Public School Division. Westmount Community School Grades: 5/6 and 4/5. Saskatoon
- Rights Advocacy Project Launch: Regina RCSSD. Sacred Heart Community School. Grades 4 to 8

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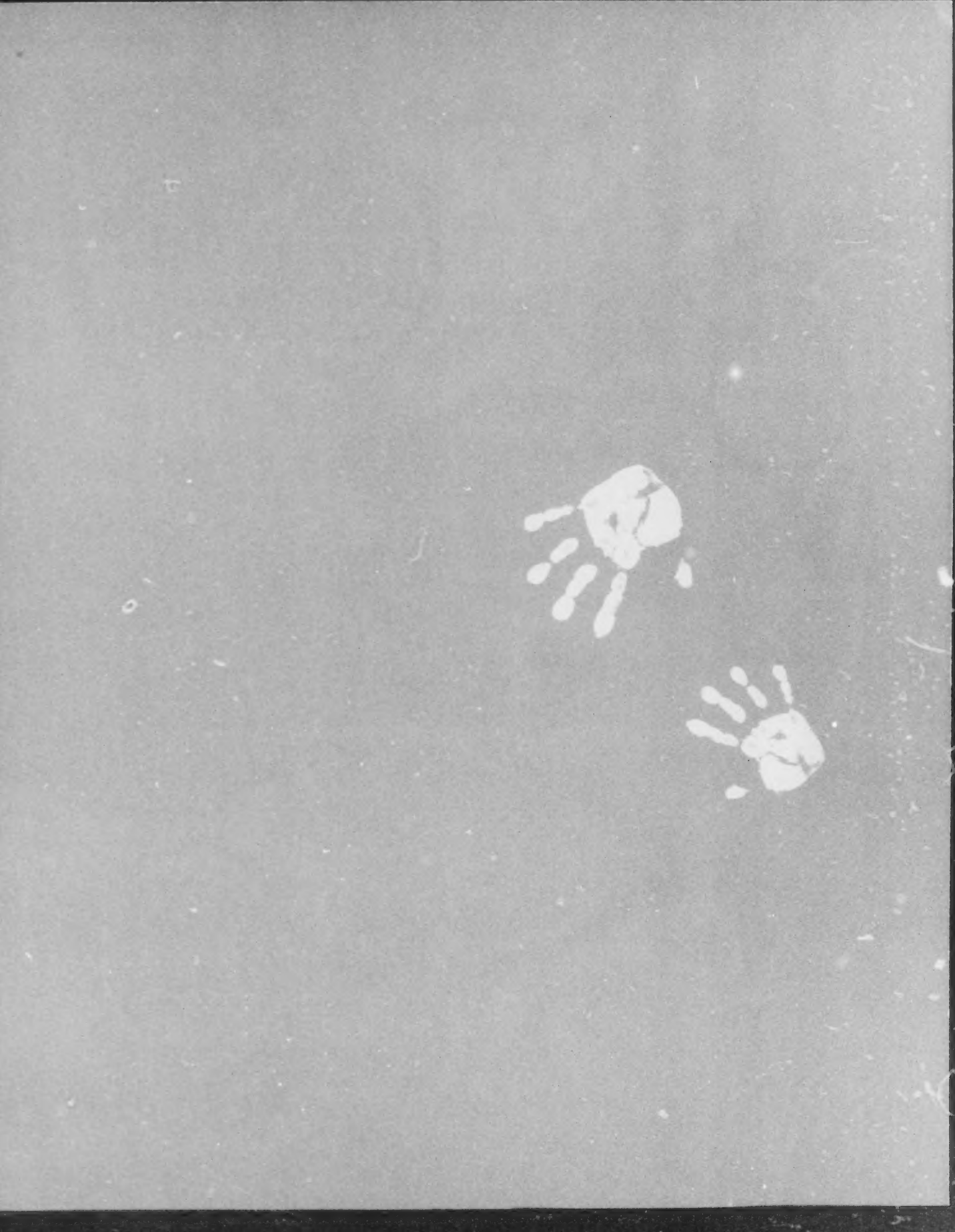

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